

North Chicago VA News



VA Great Lakes
Health Care System
VISN 12

North Chicago
VA Medical Center
3001 Green Bay Road
North Chicago, Illinois 60064

May 2005

NATIONAL HOSPITAL WEEK



A special thank you from the Leadership of this medical center is extended to each employee: "During National Hospital Week, we wish to thank all of our fellow employees at the medical center and at the Community Based Outpatient Clinics in Evanston, McHenry and Kenosha for a great year! We do recognize and appreciate all you do throughout the year to provide the very best

care and services to our veterans. Each employee is vital to the success of our mission. It is indeed our pleasure to work with an outstanding group of dedicated individuals."

Two employee activities were held in recognition of National Hospital Week. Mark Therrien, a humorist and motivational speaker, gave two presentations on Monday, May 16, in Bourke Hall. Participants were treated to brownies, punch and lots of laughter. Mr. Therrien helped us to realize we are never too old to find humor in our every day lives. And as the saying goes, "laughter is the best medicine." He encouraged every employee to reach out to

our veterans, visitors, and co-workers with a big smile and a helping hand – both go a long way in making a person feel welcome and important.

The other employee activity was the ice cream social held on Thursday, May 19 in Bldg. 134 Dayroom and Courtyard. Employees truly enjoyed making their own sundae with all the toppings.



NATIONAL NURSES WEEK, MAY 6-12, 2005



Nurses: Many Roles One Profession

The Excellence in Nursing Award annually honors four individuals: two Registered Nurses, one in a staff nurse role and one in an expanded nurse role; a Licensed Practical Nurse or Licensed Vocational Nurse; and a Nursing Assistant. Awardees are actively engaged in the care of patients at a VA facility. The recipients' contributions to the care of patients in any VA health care setting are patient-centered and demonstrate such excellence as to merit recognition from peers.

On Monday, May, 9, 2005, during National Nurses Week, North Chicago VA Medical Center Leadership presented nursing staff members with certificates and awards for being either selected as a recipient of the 2005 North Chicago Excellence in Nursing Award or a nominee in these categories.

Not only was Mary Lange-Alberts, RN, ND, selected for the North Chicago VAMC Nurse in an expanded role category, she was also selected as the winner in this category for VISN 12. Her

nomination package was sent on for review in Central Office for consideration of the Secretary's Award for Excellence in Nursing.

Ms. Rosario Vongsakul, RN, Ms. Ann Juska, LPN, and Ms. Rhonda Anderson, NA, were selected as the North Chicago VAMC 2005 Nursing Excellence Recipients in their specific categories.

Nominees also recognized for their accomplishments are as follows: Ms. Karen Azizz, NA, Mr. Davis Bullock, NA, Ms. Eun Yang, RN and Ms. Brenda Zinck, RN.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL!!



Rose Elder, nurse manager, portrays the many roles of nurses.

North Chicago News

North Chicago News is published for staff and volunteers of the North Chicago VA Medical Center. Submissions can be sent to douglas.shouse@med.va.gov

Contributors for this issue:

Katherine Dong
Audiology/
Speech
Pathology

Kenny List
Community
Affairs

Nancy Gember
EEO Manager

Colleen Smoger
Patient
Services

48th Annual Federal Employee Of The Year



The 48th Annual Federal Employee of the Year Awards Program was held on May 4 at the Cadillac Club Soldier Field Stadium. Federal employees throughout the Chicago

Area were honored for their exemplary job performance and outstanding contributions to public service. The following North Chicago VAMC employees were

nominated : **Outstanding Professional Employee:** Katherine Dong and Maribeth Hilo; **Outstanding Supervisory Employee:** V. Chowdary Jampala and Kathleen Mega; **Outstanding Program Specialist Employee:** Lourdes Gube and Mary Schindler; **Outstanding Technical/Program Support Employee:** Lucius Campbell, Naomi Lewis, Judith Rodgers, Colleen Smoger, Jack Tisdale and Emily White; **Outstanding Secretarial/Clerical Employee:** Rita Eckert and Denise Lear; **Outstanding Trades/Crafts Employee:** James Danielson
Outstanding Team: VA/DoD Inpatient Mental Health Unit Planning Team and McHenry VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic Team. Congratulations to all of our nominees!!

ASSISTANT FISCAL OFFICER



Dawn Brown was recently selected as the Assistant Fiscal Officer. Prior to arriving at North Chicago VAMC, Dawn worked as the System Accountant and Accounting Director at NAVFAC Midwest Great Lakes. Ms. Brown received an Associate of Arts Degree in Accounting from the University of Maryland in 1993, a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Accounting from the University of Phoenix in 1996, and a Master of Science Degree in Management from Troy State University in 2000.

Dawn served in the United States Marine Corp from 1986 to 1999. She is married to Patrick Brown, has two children (one girl and one boy), and two dogs. Currently, she serves as a Girls Scout assistant leader and assistant girls youth basketball coach. Her hobbies include reading, camping and walking. Her accomplishments include the completion of each degree program and establishing an accounting department for her last organization located in Crane, Indiana. A warm welcome is extended to Dawn!

SYSTEM-WIDE ONGOING ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW STRATEGY (SOARS) VISIT

During the week of May 9th, 2005 this facility underwent a SOARS Site Visit. The team assisted us in preparing for our upcoming CAP survey, scheduled for fall 2005. The eight member team assessed systems and processes that address the needs and requirements of the many internal, external, oversight and accreditation customers, partners and agencies that we are accountable to every day. The SOARS team identified several areas

as strong practices that should be considered by other facilities for use.

These practices include:

- *Pressure Ulcer management
- *Employee PPD compliance
- *Use of RAI/MDS Data in Long Term Care
- *Cleanliness of Clinical and Public Areas
- *Staff Collegiality and Cooperativeness
- *Nurse proficiency completion rate

- *Resident Supervision
- *Collaborative HFMEA for new facility
- *Long Term Care program

We should all take pride in the excellent outcome of our SOARS site visit. These results involved everyone's participation in demonstrating the high standard of care provided to our veterans. Congratulations to all for a job well done.

WOMEN VETERANS PROGRAM

For the past three years, the VISN 12 Women Veterans Program Managers have partnered with the VISN 12 Education Committee to provide VA practitioners with up-to-date information on women's health. In planning this year's update, the decision was made to focus on two areas: the interplay between physical and mental health issues and the needs of women returning from combat deployment. These topics were selected because over 15,291 women have served in the Global War on Terrorism thus far with more than 2,603 women receiving health care from the VA system. These women are critically different from other women veterans. Not only are they generally younger, but approximately 88% of them are members of Reserve or National Guard units that were activated. More significantly, women are now being placed in positions where they

are experiencing actual combat trauma in significant numbers for the first time.

The keynote speaker at this workshop was Bonnie McIntosh, MSW. Ms. McIntosh is a social worker and the chief of Comprehensive Ambulatory Psychiatry at the Providence, RI VAMC. In 2003, Ms. McIntosh was deployed to Kuwait/Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom, where she was part of a team that provided combat stress support for various Army units. Ms. McIntosh provided a unique first-hand perspective on the experiences of women serving in OIF/OEF. She also gave invaluable guidance for providing seamless care management for these veterans as they return home and attempt to re-integrate into their families and communities.

Other speakers provided information on hormonal changes associated with menopause; Fibromyalgia; and strategies for screening patients in the Primary Care setting for trauma.

Approximately 60 social workers, nurses, PAs, NPs, psychiatrists and Primary Care providers attended the workshop. Participants almost unanimously stated that the program was beneficial in helping them understand the special needs of women veterans. The Women Veterans Program Managers plan to continue sponsoring annual updates. For practitioners who were unable to attend the workshop, a videotape of the entire program will be available in the medical center library.

AMERICAN EX-POW DAY



April 9th 2005 was American Ex-POW Day. Mr. Sullivan presented four of our inpatient veterans, who were Prisoners Of War with a letter of sincere gratitude for their service and sacrifice to our nation. They are Bernard Brooks, Arthur Karnowski, Joseph Egyud, and Vince Marino (pictured holding a photograph of his family with Mr. Sullivan and the staff of 134-3B)

ASIAN PACIFIC HERITAGE MONTH

Each May, the North Chicago VA Medical Center joins the Nation in celebrating Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. The national theme for the 2005 observance is "Liberty and Freedom for All." Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are a diverse group composed of people of many ethnicities, languages, religions, and

cultures who have a shared history in the United States. They include Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Pacific Islander (e.g., native Hawaiian and Samoan), South Asian (e.g. Asian Indian, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan) and Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Lao, Hmong, Thai, Indonesian, Malaysian, and Singaporean) Americans. Over

15,000 Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders currently work in the VA system. Throughout our medical center, posters were hung in recognition of Asian Pacific Month. Also, the display case located by the Canteen highlighted items and photos of past heritage celebrations held at the medical center.



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BRING YOUR CHILD TO WORK

The medical center held the yearly event, “Bring Your Child to Work” on Thursday, April 28. An organized program was planned for all children who wished to participate. The program began with breakfast provided by the Canteen, followed by the children viewing the video, “Our Turn to Serve” and then visits to Audiology, Dental, SPD, and Physical Therapy.

One highlight of the day’s event, was the K-9 demonstration by Police Sergeant/K-9 Enforcement Officer, Bill Poirier and his canine partner Nikko . The children were treated to a pizza luncheon sponsored through fundraising activities of the EEO Committee. The day wrapped up with the children working side by side with veterans in an arts and crafts activity. With the creative ideas and guidance provided by Karen Fleming, Recreation



Therapist, the children and veterans made a combination Earth Day and Mother’s Day project which consisted of decorating a flower pot, planting a flower in it and making a card. They also made a picture frame out of foam art, which housed a Polaroid picture of them engaged in this activity. Each child was thrilled with creating this unique gift for a special someone for Mother’s Day.



During this last activity, the children enjoyed refreshments and helped serve refreshments to the veterans. Based on comments received from the children, this was truly an exciting and fun day at the VA. Thanks to all staff who helped to make this a memorable experience for our children, and thanks to the parents who had children participate in the program. It was a rewarding experience for us all.

